

December 17, 2009

The Honorable Al Franken
United States Senate
320 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Orrin G. Hatch
United States Senate
104 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Franken and Senator Hatch:

We the undersigned education organizations would like to thank you for your leadership on addressing the training and professional development needs of current and aspiring school principals through the introduction of the School Principal Recruitment and Training Act of 2009.

As you are aware, research has consistently shown that the quality of school leadership has a significant impact on student learning and teacher retention. Yet all too often principals enter the profession without having developed the instructional leadership skills needed for success because training and professional development programs often have not kept pace with the changing role and needs of the principalship.

The School Principal Recruitment and Training Act would create a competitive grant program to recruit, support, and prepare principals to improve student academic achievement in high-need schools. It would create one-year residencies to train aspiring principals on instructional leadership, organizational management, and the use of data to inform instruction, and would provide ongoing support and professional development for at least two years after the aspiring principals complete the residency and commence work as school leaders.

The School Principal Recruitment and Training Act would also provide mentoring and professional development to current principals to strengthen their capacity to engage in effective instructional practices and the use of a variety of data for the purposes of instruction, supervision, evaluation, and development of teachers and highly effective school organizations.

Participants would sign an agreement to serve for at least four years in a high-need school after they have been qualified and placed in the principalship (if they are not already a practicing principal), and to work towards substantially increasing student academic achievement in the schools they will lead within approximately three to six years of their becoming principals.

To carry out these activities, districts could form partnerships with nonprofit organizations or institutions of higher education to recruit, select, train, and support aspiring or current principals with track records of transforming student learning and outcomes and preparing these principals to lead the highest-need schools, which include schools where 40% or more of their students are eligible for free and reduced-price meals, high schools with a graduation rate of 65% or less and their feeder middle level schools, as well as schools that are eligible to receive aid under the Rural Education Achievement Program.

The School Principal Recruitment and Training Act would authorize the development of a high-quality evaluation and information clearinghouse to facilitate a sharing of best practices and inform the recruitment, selection, training, and ongoing development of principals for high-need schools, including the development of standards and definitions of principal effectiveness.

Thank you again for demonstrating your support for meaningfully addressing the needs of school leaders by introducing this bill.

Sincerely,

National Organizations:

National Association of Secondary School Principals
National Association of Elementary School Principals
American Association of School Administrators
American Federation of Teachers
National Education Association
New Leaders for New Schools
Alliance for Excellent Education
Association of Educational Service Agencies
National Rural Education Advocacy Coalition
American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education
First Focus Campaign for Children
Knowledge Alliance
National Association of Federally Impacted Schools
National Forum to Accelerate Middle-Grades Reform
American Association of University Women
National Association of State Directors of Special Education, Inc.
Council for Exceptional Children

State Organizational Support:

National Middle School Association
National School Boards Association
Minnesota Association of Secondary School Principals
Minnesota Elementary School Principals' Association
Minnesota School Boards Association
Minnesota Association of School Administrators
Minnesota Rural Education Association
Education Minnesota
N.C. Principals & Assistant Principals' Association